

LECTIO DIVINA (Holy Reading)
PRAYING WITH THE SACRED SCRIPTURES
Sunday 24 May 2020
Solemnity of the Ascension of the Lord, Year A.
For those who pray the Liturgy of the Hours the Psalter takes Week Three

Before beginning prayer with the Sacred Texts, let us take a look at the week ahead in Liturgy, the Australian Church and the Social Justice Calendar.

In the Liturgy:

May 25: Our Lady Help of Christians, transferred from Sunday.

26: St. Philip Neri M

May 27, 28, 29, 30: weekdays of the seventh week of Easter

In the Australian Church:

25: Australia's National Patronal Feast

Diocese of Broome, Bunbury, Canberra-Goulburn, Military Ordinariate of Australia, Sydney, and Townsville – PATRONAL FEAST.

Maronite Diocese: Episcopal Ordination of the Most Rev. Antoine Tarabay: OLM 2013.

29: Rockhampton – Episcopal Ordination of the Most Rev. Michael McCarthy, 2014.

In the Social Justice Calendar:

May 24, 2015: Pope Francis's encyclical on Care of our Common Home.

25: Beginning of a week of solidarity with Peoples of Non-self-governing Territories.

26: World Communications Day

26: National Sorry Day, 1997.

26 May 2017: Uluru statement from the Heart, made by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Leaders.

27: Beginning of National Reconciliation Week.

27: On this day in 1967 the Referendum allows the commonwealth to make laws for Aboriginal people and to count them in the Census.

28 May 2000: 300,000 people walk for reconciliation in Sydney

29: International Day of UN Peacekeepers.

29 May 1992: Launch of the Torres Strait Islander flag.

LET US NOW MOVE INTO PRAYER WITH THE SACRED TEXTS

The readings are:

Acts 1:1-11

Ephesians 1:17-23

Matthew 29:16-20

***Lectio:* Read the first text from the Acts of the Apostles, chapter 1:1-11.**

Read it aloud. Read it slowly. Be aware of the Holy Spirit placing unction on the message of this text. When your heart responds to a word or a line, or a phrase, this is the Holy Spirit touching your heart and calling forth your response.

Meditatio: A little background to the text will help us understand it and make a response to it.

There are a number of approaches one can take to this text:

Thematic approach: expectancy, waiting patiently, keeping vigil for the coming of the Spirit.

A second approach is that of “promise”: a promise of power from on high.

Thirdly there is the presence of the cloud, which plunges us way back into Exodus: a cloud by day, a pillar of fire by night.

The journey theme interrupts us here: a journey from slavery to freedom.

Then, there is the garden theme: the garden of Olives, Gethsemane, the Garden in a valley between Jerusalem and the Mount of Olives

These themes are just suggestions.

I share my response to this reading in *Evangelizatio* 1.

The responsorial Psalm: Psalm 46

The response is: GOD MOUNTS HIS THRONE TO SHOUTS OF JOY;
A BLARE OF TRUMPETS FOR THE LORD.

Psalm 46 is an example of how some psalms express the mysteries of the life of Jesus. It is a prayer to God, the king of the world

Lectio: Read the Second Mass Reading, from Ephesians 1:17-23

Meditatio: A little background on the text, so we can best respond to it.

It is a prayer, a very deep prayer, with transformative power for those who are receiving the prayer, and for the author of Ephesians, a statement of his own relationship with the Lord.

The prayer begins with: “May the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, give you a spirit of wisdom and perception of what is revealed to bring you to full knowledge of him.”

PAUSE here...allow the text into your heart. Imagine the text being prayed over you. Be still.

The second part of the prayer is as follows: “May he enlighten the eyes of your mind, so that you can see what hope his call holds for you, what rich glories he has promised the saints will inherit and how infinitely great is the power he has exercised for us believers.”

STOP and rest in the Lord.

Then follows a description of the power of God at work in Christ, specifically in his resurrection and ascension. Pause again and allow the word to speak to your heart. I share my response in *Evangelizatio* 2.

The Gospel Verse is from Matthew 28: 19-20

GO AND TEACH ALL PEOPLE MY GOSPEL.

I AM WITH YOU ALWAYS, UNTIL THE END OF THE WORLD.

Lectio: The Gospel is from Matthew 28:16-20

Meditatio: Some background to the text which will help us respond.

This is Matthew's version of the Ascension of the Lord. The first text from the Acts of the Apostles, gave us Luke's version.

This version by Matthew has more reality about it. It is easier to understand.

It is the final commissioning of the eleven. The commissioning is not for the faint-hearted: "Go...make disciples of all the nations; baptise them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and teach them to observe all the commands I gave you." The Jerome Biblical Commentary gives us a number of texts to read in conjunction with the text at hand: Matt 2:1-12; Matt. 4:15, 16, 23-25; 8: 5-13; 10:18;15:21-28;22:1-10; All these texts have pointed towards the final goodbye and commissioning of today's text. All are from Matthew's Gospel.

Listen for the message you are to hear in this Gospel text, and be still, as you receive the visitation of God into your life through God's Sacred Word. When you feel called to do so, make your response to the text. I share mine in *Evangelizatio* 3.

EVANGELIZATIO. Evangelizatio is about the evangelization of the "self". It is that part of Lectio Divina where we make our lived response to the text. First of all, we pray with the text, take time to ponder and understand the text, be still with the text and listen to the response we are being called to make.

1. The Holy Spirit has poured unction on the words: "...you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you, and you will be my witnesses, to the ends of the earth. At a first reading and reflection and response, we may be urged to go forth and witness with a show of strength, fully equipped to proclaim the Kingdom of God. That's the big scene. Last week I had a letter from a friend, telling me how their parish is responding to the Covid-19 situation. Individual parishioners have been given a name and address of a family, or someone who lives alone. Then the chosen parishioners are sent forth, with a commitment to phone these people and check on them once a week – see if they need shopping, dog-minding, putting out the council rubbish bins and bringing them back after the truck has been; cooking – the everlasting casserole, picking up scripts from the chemist. The parishioners who have volunteered for this ministry are part of the overall pastoral care which is proclaiming a God of love, and God's kingdom of love made manifest by Jesus in the Gospel.
2. "May he enlighten the eyes of your minds..." These eight words have called me forth to ponder and pray. Sr. Joan Chittister, in her book "Our Holy Yearnings" speaks of the mind, in a way that is relevant to this reading from Ephesians: "Mindfulness, the awareness of the sacredness of the details of life, makes haste...impossible. It makes every act a sacred act." She also has the following to say about "enlightenment": "The enlightened are those who see through the darkness of the present moment to the values beyond it." The present time (2020) has thrown some might challenges at humanity – may we pray to see with divine light, the "values beyond the darkness.

3. I am called to respond to: “And know that I am with you always; yes, to the end of time.” Possibly, we have all responded to these words throughout our lives. My memories are the times that have been dark for me. Pitch-black really! On one occasion I was so far into darkness that I couldn’t even pick up my bible. But – without picking up the bible, these words came to me: “Know that I am with you always; yes, to the end of time”. I have walked with many people through their dark times. And I have shared with you that one day in 2019, outside of Woolworths, a woman approached me and asked me to pray over her: her husband had walked away from their marriage after 25 years. She had children, and they wanted to know where Daddy was. Not a day goes that I remember the McCanns, when Madelene was abducted in Portugal. The twins weren’t taken, but their constant “Mummy, where’s Maddy?” was a paralysing darkness. Scotland Yard has never given up and people like me have never given up. This is one of my daily prayers: for children who have been abducted.

*Lectio Divina is prayer with the Sacred Scriptures.
We read, we seek to understand with the help of a commentary,
we ponder, we take time for stillness and we respond.
It is a way of life, not a method of prayer.
Take the Mother of God as your model.*



The Ascension by Sr Mary Stephen CRSS